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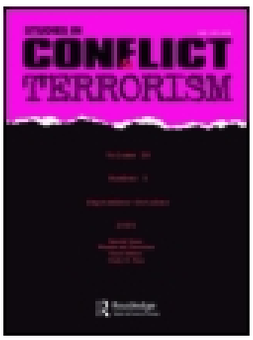
DOI:
10.1080/1057610X.2018.1452709



Studies in Conflict & Terrorism

ISSN: 1057-610X (Print) 1521-0731 (Online) Journal homepage: http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/uter20

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To cite this article: Raquel da Silva, Pablo Fernández-Navarro, Miguel M. Gonçalves, Catarina Rosa & Joana Silva (2018): Disengagement from Political Violence and Deradicalisation: A Narrative-Dialogical Perspective, Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, DOI: 10.1080/1057610X.2018.1452709

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2018.1452709

Accepted author version posted online: 15 Mar 2018.

Publisher: Routledge

Journal: *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*

DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2018.1452709

Disengagement from Political Violence and Deradicalisation: A Narrative-Dialogical Perspective

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Abstract

This article applies a dialogical analysis to the change processes involved in moving from engagement with to disengagement from an armed militant group, as well as from radicalisation to deradicalisation. The findings underline the interplay between different push and pull factors at individual, organisational and societal levels which played a role in the already mentioned processes in three periods of time – engagement with, life within and disengagement from an armed organisation. The dialogical framework conceptualises the development trajectory as relationships between a variety of positions of the self (I-positions), which generate different personal meanings involved in processes of disengagement and deradicalisation.

Key-words: disengagement, deradicalisation, political violence, dialogical narrative analysis

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Disengagement from Political Violence and Deradicalisation: A Narrative-Dialogical Perspective

The research literature exploring engagement in and disengagement from politically motivated violence, often referred to as terrorism, as well as radicalisation and deradicalisation processes has been growing exponentially in recent years. This has mainly occurred since the events of 9/11 and has seen a renewed interest in the current context of IS-led and -inspired attacks. However, the research exploring the change processes involved in moving from engagement with to disengagement from armed militant groups, as well as from radicalisation to deradicalisation has been much more limited. In terms of radicalisation studies, for instance, Neumann and Kleinmann[1] reviewed 260 publications (1980 -2010) and concluded that 34 percent of the studies in their sample were either methodologically or empirically poor, whereas 11 percent were both. Horgan and Braddock,[2] reviewing the results of a one-year pilot study of selected deradicalisation programs, also ascertained that "data surrounding even the most basic of facts about these programs remains limited".

In this context, the present study aims to explore such processes of change from the perspective of the dialogical self.[3] It does so by applying a dialogical analysis to previously collected transcripts of a life story interview with a former militant of the FP-25, a left-wing armed organisation active in shooting and bombing campaigns throughout the 1980s in Portugal.[4] This perspective has the potential to offer a more integrative and multidimensional vision of the change processes involved in the pathways from engagement in to disengagement from an armed organisation, as well as from radicalisation to deradicalisation Consequently, the study of such complex processes of narrative change involving attitudes and identity as well as the weight of ideology and violence, enables a shift in focus away from the starting point (e.g., radicalisation) and the result (e.g., deradicalisation), and towards a more holistic perspective. We thereby address an existing lack of knowledge about: "what the process of deradicalisation looks like from the beginning till the end in terms of pathways out of radicalisation," that Elshimi has recently identified.[5]

Engagement and radicalisation

The study of the motivation to engage in a political violent organisation has frequently focused on the individual, considering for instance affiliative factors (familiarity with radicalised individuals, search for a sense of belonging); risk factors (lack of family support, connections with criminality); economic factors (e.g., unemployment); social factors (desire for networking, existence of shared narratives and cultural resources, lack of confidence in official institutions); and psychological factors (personal or family crisis, identity problems, experiences of injustice, association with the victims' suffering, conception of the violent actions as not immoral).[6] However, individual factors should not be considered in isolation, but in the light of contextual factors, which impact individuals' perceptions of the external reality and their subsequent responses.[7] Consequently, the involvement with a political violent organisation is a personal choice, influenced by the perceived contextual circumstances, which often feed grievances and intensify demands for violent action.[8] Such a choice involves a radicalisation process,[9] which comprises a revolutionary positioning that leads to the pursuit of political ends through violent actions. This radicalisation process triggers changes in "beliefs, feelings and behaviours in directions that increasingly justify intergroup violence and demand sacrifice in defence of the in-group".[10] This has often raised questions regarding the causal connection between cognitive and behavioural factors. In this sense, it is common to think that radicalised views lead to violent action, and that the change of such views affects action. However, research on this subject shows that individuals often develop radicalised views *after* joining a violent organisation, not before,[11] and it is important to note that while radicalised views may open a path to politically motivated violence, they are not criminal or harmful in themselves.[12]

Individuals' commitment to an underground political violent organisation is seen by della Porta[13] as "a continuum of the slippery slope that had brought activists to join the organisation". She suggests two characteristics of life within a political violent organisation that fuel both continued commitment and violence: affective and cognitive closure. Affective closure is engendered by the deep and intense relationships that occur among the members of a usually small, closed, restricted, and restrictive organisation. Affective closure increases as actions become more dangerous, casualties start happening (e.g., death and/or arrest of comrades), and militants become unable to imagine their lives differently, devoting everything

they have and are to the organisation. Consequently, affective closure is fed by the development of a freedom fighter identity, the strengthening of solidarity among militants, and the increasing perception of opponents as evil and non-human, which drives organisations and individuals to escalate the level of violence of their actions.[14] Cognitive closure relates to militants' need to make sense of their behaviour. However, such an exercise happens in a constrained environment, which over time tends to become more and more isolated from the outside world, impacting the narratives and value systems adopted by militants. Thus, life underground may be responsible "for the depoliticization and degeneracy of underground action at both the group and individual levels", causing a change of focus from the initially defended political goals to the ends of violence themselves, and to the maintenance of the collective identity.[15]

Disengagement and deradicalisation

Leaving behind a political violent organisation is a complex process, which involves different trajectories for different individuals and which can happen in different circumstances and formats, involving a "range of push-and-pull factors".[16] It may be performed by a single person or by a group of people; it may be either performed according to the activist's will or against it; and it may be motivated by ideological factors (disappointment with the paths chosen by the organisation, differences at strategic, political and ideological levels), psychological factors (feelings of burn-out, change of political and/or personal priorities), or physical factors (detention, change of function within the organisation, exclusion from activity by the organisation itself).[17] Despite being disengaged from a political violent organisation, a militant may still agree and support its cause.

This brings us to the important distinction between disengagement and deradicalisation. According to Reinares,[18] disengagement relates to behavioural modification, implying that violent acts are no longer committed, whereas deradicalisation relates to attitudinal change, implying a process of ideological transformation, whose essential characteristic is the abandonment of the belief that violence is a privileged tool at the service of the political struggle.[19] However, in many cases disengagement from a political violent organisation does not occur because activists abandon their radicalised views, but because they are prevented

for various reasons from engaging in the struggle (e.g., imprisonment, change of priorities).[20] At the same time, behavioural changes (voluntarily or not), traumatic experiences, disappointments with the organisation and experience of high levels of distress make individuals more open to cognitive and life transformations.[21]

Additionally, the effectiveness of such transformations is not related to traditional forms of punishment alone, but also to the existence of educational, social, psychological and economic support for former militants[22], as well as to contextual factors surrounding a political violent organisation, both external and internal.[23] External incentives are related to the political context in question. On the one hand, contexts of strong repression pose many difficulties to an organisation that opposes the established order, possibly meaning torture and even death of its members. On the other hand, contexts that encourage political participation and offer second chances (e.g., amnesty) may also counter violence and support disengagement decisions, opening up opportunities for legal actions and leading to processes of de-escalation and transition to a legitimate political process.[24] Internal incentives are related to the organisation's own structure and dynamics: political violent organisations require sacrifices from their members, such as full availability, which means physical and emotional absence from the outside world, and giving a prominent place to relationships inside the organisation, creating strong emotional connections among the activists.[25] However, over time militants may shift their social identities away from the armed organisation, feeling frustrated, discouraged, and unsure about their commitment. These feelings can be caused by disagreement with decisions taken by the leadership, which are seen as deviations from the initially defended political aims, such as the abrupt escalation of violence. Moreover, militants may blame the leadership for mistakes and the experience of hostile circumstances (e.g., death of comrades or children).[26] Detailed scrutiny of these moments would enable us to access meaningful negotiations of meanings.

To further explore the path of identity transformation that ultimately leads to a successful disengagement from politically violent activities we must move beyond the analysis of individual, social, contextual, political and relational factors in isolation. We argue that a dialogical narrative analysis allows us to see the dynamics between these different elements in action and to analyze the ongoing process of intrapersonal management. Which meaning(s) do militants assign to these factors? How do militants incorporate these meanings into their own identity and how are they managed to determine their choices? In the following section, we set out the theoretical framework behind this argument.

Self as a dialogical process

The notion of the self as the center of experience or as an isolated entity has been challenged by a dynamic, dialogical and relational conceptualization of the self. Dialogical perspectives, originated in the field of Psychology, argue that we do not have a single-sided self, but that our self is composed of multiple positions.[27] The self is like a society in the mind, and the multiplicity of the self is a consequence of the social and dialogical nature of the meaning-making processes. A multiplicity of positions can be found in the self: culturally available positions ("I as an academic"), the audiences we are addressing ("the critical or the supportive readers of this paper"), positions from my family background ("I, who was raised as a catholic child"), positions constructed across my development ("I as an agnostic adult"), and so on. All experiences – as we attach meaning to them – allow creating new positions, which are assimilated into the self and become resources that are available in the future.[28] According to Hermans,[29] the I-positions' repertoire comprises internal positions (i.e., those that are perceived as parts of the person, usually introduced by the personal pronoun "I", e.g., "I as a mother," "I as a militant") and external positions (i.e., those that are felt as aspects of the environment, but that the person identifies as belonging to him or herself, usually preceded by the possessive pronoun "mine", "my", e.g., "My son", "My comrade"). In addition, significant others are not the only ones who have a space in the identity arena, but so do the social groups to which the individual belongs (i.e., a collective voice, e.g., "My religion", "My culture", "My political party"). This repertoire of I-positions should not be understood as a predefined and delimited set of perspectives, because the self-system is constantly recreated throughout its development.[30]

When a position constructs meaning, that position gains a voice that is present in the self.[31] Thus, each position is endowed with a voice that communicates its point of view, desires, motives, feelings and memories.[32] Each production of meaning (personal or societal) implies the activation of a position that is voicing its perspective.[33] In the self, these different I-positions relate to each other as external interactions do – there may be positions of agreement, disagreement, support, criticism, coalition, and so on.[34] The integration and coherence of the self is not achieved through the presence of a single omniscient narrator (i.e. the centralized self), but through a dialogical articulation between this plurality of simultaneously independent and interconnected I-positions.[35]

In this diversity of positions, there are two prototypical forms of interaction: monologue and dialogue. In monologue, only one voice (or a set of similar voices) manifests itself and dominates the whole system, while the other I-positions remain silent or in the background, without the possibility of exchange or joint construction of meanings.[36] Thus, interactions that lean to the monological side tend to create centripetal forces in the self, constraining diversity and creating a dominant perspective of the self, the others and the world.[37] In dialogue, the perspectives of different I-positions are manifested, assuming their more or less equal rights to contribute to the outcome of the interactions, although differences in power may be present.[38] Dialogue between positions is usually expressed in the narrative's flexibility: if different voices are being heard, the resulting narrative will be more open and integrative of the different I-positions of the self, leading to a more complex and adaptive construction of meaning. Views of the self, the others and the world tend to be more complex when the self leans to the dialogical side, and centrifugal forces emerge in the self and create openness to change and innovation. From a dialogical perspective, all narratives have one or several narrators, telling their stories to internal or external audiences. Thus, a change in the narrative implies a change in the narrators, i.e. voices, which are telling the story.

As an illustration, let us take a militant who lives in hiding under a clandestine identity. As a matter of survival, the "I as a militant" voice may assume the self-system's dominance, silencing the other alternative positions. Let us imagine that this position is related to other similar ones like "others as oppressive, and unfair" or "others deserving punishment", or even "I with a mission in the world". As such, meanings present in the self are subjected to a centripetal influence and all the positions available are very homogeneous. Innovation is neutralized by the similarity and mutual reinforcement of the meanings of the I-positions available and the self is leaning toward monologue. Later in life these positions may come into dialogue with other more nuanced positions (e.g., "I as a husband", "I as a father"), thus opening the door for a more complex construction of meanings, in which the person revises the past positions. The main point is that as these more heterogeneous positions emerge, they are associated with different experiences (e.g., taking care of a son) and, as such, they bring with them different meanings. Let us imagine that for some reason the position of "I as a father" challenges the previous notions of good and evil present in the former voices. This creates a tension that needs to be resolved and may open the self to innovation. The dynamic of the I-positions is now characterized by a centrifugal movement in which the former equilibri-

um is in danger. New positions need to be accommodated in the self to create more flexibility and heterogeneity in the meanings of the I-positions.

Often the beginning of change occurs by one of two different processes: dominance reversal or negotiation.[39] When dominance reversal occurs, a formerly dominant position is now dominated, and the subjugated voice is at the foreground. The potential for change in dominance reversal is far more reduced than in negotiation, as this reversal leans again to the monological side. When negotiation occurs, the positions engage in dialogue and are open to change.

Taking the previous example, a dominance-reversal could occur if the positions "I as militant" vs. "others as oppressive and deserving punishing", evolve to something like "I as a former oppressor" vs. "others as victims". An example of negotiation could be something like "I as a father, still fighting for a fairer society, but now through non-violent means, because I need to care for others, as I care for my son". In this situation "I as a father" plays a pivotal role in changing the self, starting a negotiation process between the different I-positions. The position "I as a father" operates as a meta-position, that is, it articulates two or more previously conflicting positions and allows the creation of new meanings. The development of meta-positions is of extreme importance to change.[40] By creating distance from the other I-positions, meta-positions achieve a comprehensive view. Meta-positions can be imagined as mediators between opposed or different positions, allowing conflicts to dissolve. Through meta-positions the different stories that emerge from a multi-vocal self can be integrated into a complex, dynamic and coherent narrative script.[41] Meta-positions increase the flexibility of meanings present in the self as they create what Brinegar and colleagues[42] termed meaning bridges, that is a common language shared by the alien positions. For instance, "I as militant" and "I as a father", in our previous example, may now share a meaning bridge featured by "fairness" and "fighting inequality in the world, by not creating more inequalities (through violent means)".

We suggest that in light of these considerations, radicalisation can be approached as a form of monologue, in which challenging and diverse voices are silenced, resulting in the affective and cognitive closure observed by della Porta.[43] This makes a meaning bridge between the dominant (pro-radicalised positions) and dominated voices (pro-deradicalised positions) unavailable. As meaning bridges emerge from the meta-positions that articulate different aspects of the self, more flexibility emerges. In this study, we apply this dialogical

framework to the narratives of radicalisation and deradicalisation of a former militant, aiming to understand how the multiplicity of the self evolves and is negotiated in these transitions.

Method

Participant

Data from this study is drawn from a research project on the narratives of former militants in Portugal.[44] From the broader pool of data collected for the original study (N=28), one in-depth interview was selected for analysis. Considering that this study aims to analyse the transformation processes involved in moving from engagement with to disengagement from an armed militant group, as well as from radicalisation to deradicalisation, we selected a case that reveals considerable narrative change before, during and after engagement in a violent organisation. The participant, for the purposes of preserving her identity, was named Julia. Julia is a former militant of the FP-25 (*Forças Populares – 25 de Abril*, i.e. Popular Forces – 25th April), an armed organisation composed of left-wing radical activists who believed that the 25 April 1974 Revolution that overthrew the dictatorial regime in Portugal would lead to socialism. However, this expectation was crushed by the counter-revolution of 25 November 1975, which these militants' perspective saw as the cause of serious social injustices, particularly in the workplace.[45] As a response, the FP-25 fought against the extreme right, which was perceived as returning to power and violently forcing the left factions in the country into isolation.[46] The violent acts conducted by the FP-25 resulted in several deaths and injuries of mainly factory administrators, who were seen as abusive towards their employees (e.g., unpaid wages, unjust redundancies). This enabled the FP-25 to claim that they supported the working class: on the one hand, they were setting the example to the workers by encouraging them to fight against injustices, and, on the other hand, the organisation's violent actions against industry administrators would discourage them from ignoring their employees' rights.[47] The FP-25 was ultimately dismantled by the police in collaboration with three repentant militants of the organisation. This process started in 1983, but the FP-25 remained active until its total dissolution in 1989.[48]

Julia is married, a mother of three and was 55 years-old at the time of the interview. When her engagement with the FP-25 began, Julia was a young adult who had left school to work in a factory. Throughout the years in which she was engaged with the FP-25, Julia managed to maintain a good relationship with her family, in particular with her parents, described

as highly understanding and supportive. Julia had physically disengaged from the organisation at the time of its dismantling, as she was serving a prison sentence.

Interview procedure

After providing informed consent, Julia participated in two semi-structured life history interviews. The first interview was conducted in 2010, and a second one in 2013. The goal of this second interview was to allow for a deep and more thorough exploration of topics that might have lacked development in the first interview. Therefore, for analytical purposes these two interviews will be treated as one. The semi-structured interview schedule (provided upon request) was used in a flexible way to help stimulate reflection on important topics related to the processes of engagement/disengagement and radicalisation/deradicalisation, while allowing the interviewee to lead the course of the conversation and to choose what and how to recount the events. In this way, each interview allowed the development of rich storied accounts. The interviewee had the liberty to tell thorough, multi-layered stories about her life, and she was particularly encouraged to recount her involvement with the FP-25. In this sense, the data produced during the interview encounter and analysed below represent Julia's memories, which cannot be taken as *the* representation of *the* past reality, but as *a* representation of *a* past reality that is constructed in the present.

Data analysis

The current study applies a methodology capable of grasping the developmental nature of Julia's multivocal self, regarding her engagement and radicalisation across three periods of time: before and during her engagement in the FP-25, as well as after her disengagement from the FP-25. In addition, it aims to analyse this transformation process by departing from a structured framework that guides the coders' analyses of the participant's narratives. The motives for this decision were twofold: 1) to add rigour to the identification of individual push and pull factors towards engagement and radicalisation from a dialogical perspective; and 2) to allow for a reliable replication of the current study. In order to achieve this objective, a team of four researchers with different areas of expertise (political violence, dialogical self, and narrative change processes) gathered to define and operationalise the analytical framework (presented in Table 1). Firstly, the team of researchers identified the themes that have been described in the literature as important in the analysis of engagement vs. disen-

gagement and radicalisation vs. deradicalisation. Then, they consensually selected some of these theoretically driven themes according to the specificities of Julia's case, attempting to integrate a top-down with a bottom-up approach. Regarding the processes of engagement vs. disengagement, the decision was made to analyse push and pull dialogical internal positions under two themes: 1) affiliative, personal and social contexts, and 2) identification with the organisation. Regarding the processes of radicalisation vs. deradicalisation, the team of researchers decided to analyse push and pull dialogical positions under three themes: 1) ideology, 2) social injustice, and 3) violence. In Table 1 each of these themes is defined according to the way they were taken into account and put into place by the FP-25. In this sense, they represent the organisation's external voice identified by Da Silva's research.[49] Secondly, considering that the aim of this study is to explore Julia's internal dialogical positioning across three different periods of time, the coding procedure incorporated this temporal dimension. To sum up, the framework created allowed researchers to track Julia's push and pull factors through a dialogical perspective occurring in each theme defined as relevant for her engagement/disengagement and radicalisation/deradicalisation processes, in three different periods of time.

From the original team of four researchers two worked as main coders and the other two as external reviewers, following three steps:

1) The main coders analysed the full interview transcript and conducted an independent identification of Julia's internal dialogical positions according to the thematic framework described in Table 1.

2) The main coders gathered and reached a consensual definition of Julia's dialogical positions, according to the thematic framework described in Table 1.

3) The main coders discussed their reservations with the external reviewers and reached a final coding agreement.

[INSERT TABLE 1 HERE]

Results and discussion

Results are organised into three main sections, relating to the three different periods of time: 1) the time before Julia's engagement in the FP-25 (before 1980), 2) the time during her engagement with the FP-25 (from 1980 until 1985), and 3) the time after she had disengaged from the organisation until the time of the interview (from 1985 until 2013). For each period of time, Julia's I-positions that (she remembers) fed her engagement with or disengagement from the FP-25 are presented first, and Julia's I-positions feeding radicalisation or deradicalisation are presented second. The dialogical analysis of engagement vs. disengagement and radicalisation vs. deradicalisation processes will focus on the themes described in Table 1. Extracts from the interview transcripts will be used to illustrate Julia's narrative accounts, and to allow the reader to see how the coders identified the dialogical positions and how these develop along the three time periods. At the end of each section, a table provides an overview of the I-positions identified for each period of time and theme, as well as their context and dialogical function(s).

Period of time 1: Before FP-25

The main factors supporting Julia's dialogical positioning towards engagement in the FP-25 seem to have been associated with the affiliative, personal and social context. She was a young adult experiencing the contagious effect of a post-Revolution period which had ended 48 years of a dictatorial regime. This social context seems to have empowered her social intervention-prone voice: "I as an idealist looking for social transformation" – "*it was the moment when all social norms were called into question, all political choices were questioned and we were part of that in a very intense way (...) It was little more than the idea that we were all equal and that we could create a society in which people were all equal."* This I-position was difficult to integrate with the one culturally established for a young woman at that historical moment in time: "I as a future wife and mother". However, in Julia's case, the "I as an idealist looking for social transformation" seems to have assumed a dominant role and she got progressively more and more involved in political activism. When she turned sixteen and left secondary school, she decided to start working in a factory because she be-

lieved that *"the revolution was going to happen and it would happen in the factories."* Andrews,[50] remarking on the relationship between political activism and times of social turmoil, says that individuals' "starting point is always the political narratives they have inherited". This is a perspective that was evident throughout this period of Julia's life. The euphoria and politicisation of the post-Revolution period in Portugal helped develop a consciousness that shaped her political awareness and framed her subsequent activities. The fact that she had some left-wing politically engaged peers, as well as contact with former violent militants who had fought during the dictatorship reinforced this movement - *"I got involved progressively, I had some contacts, not from within the organisation, simply friendships and close relationships in secondary school with people from the so-called extreme-left."* This corroborates the idea that familiarity with radicalised individuals is a push factor towards engagement with political violence.[51] With regards to Julia's account of this period of time, only pro-engagement centripetal I-positions were found. That is, all the emergent I-positions are relatively homogeneous and easily in agreement with the formal positions of the FP-25.

We equally found that in terms of radicalisation vs. deradicalisation, Julia's narrative suggests that the social and interpersonal contexts of her early teens contributed to the radicalisation of her perspectives regarding political change and social transformation. In relation to "ideology", she closely identified herself with Marxism-Leninism, which was the ideology behind various terrorist groups that violently challenged western style capitalism and liberal democracy during the 20th century.[52] The "I as a Marxist-Leninist and anti-capitalist" voice is expressed in her need to "*confront those who seemed to us to be the symbols of the bosses*." This ideological positioning is strongly supported by a grievance-prone I-position representing her strong intolerance towards injustice and a profound disappointment with the post-Revolution government and the workers' conditions, particularly after the counter-Revolution which took place on November 25th 1975 and put an end to the leftist tendency of the former government. Julia, in agreement with FP-25's views, perceived right-wing capitalist politics as closer to the old dictatorial regime, responsible for exacerbating social injustice and maintaining an unbalanced distribution of resources. In her opinion, the counter-Revolution had brought such politics back. Thus, her position "I as a citizen threatened by capitalism and by a right-wing government" was clearly expressed: *"this will necessarily turn to the right and we'll end up being targets."* In parallel, Julia's radicalised perspective on violence as a way to fight back and restore social justice also seems to have been reinforced at this period of time by an I-position of "I as a political idealist perceiving past left-wing violent activists as

heroic role models": *"the perception that they had been involved in political violence before April 25th was a sort of passport to the consistency I was looking for; there was an heroic sensation in their actions, in them as people who had been able to do that."* In sum, in her account of this period of time only pro-radicalisation I-positions were identified in Julia's narrative. This dialogical positioning emerged across all three of the analysed themes, contributing to a centripetal movement of the self towards monologue.

[INSERT TABLE 2 HERE]

Period of time 2: During FP-25

During the early part of her engagement in the FP-25, Julia's narrative reflects a dominant pro-engagement I-position associated with the theme "identification with the organisation" that could be expressed as "I as a fully committed FP-25 militant". Her narrative also suggests the existence of other pro-engagement centripetal I-positions which not only seem congruent with, but also feed this dominant position. One such I-position is "I as a loyal comrade", which might have strengthened Julia's identification with and commitment to the organisation's goals, even in times of greater difficulty and disagreement, as she stated: *"we're all in this, I won't simply turn my back."* This loyalty was perceived to be reciprocal and Julia also relied on other members of the organisation: *"I wasn't alone, there were people in whom I trusted. I think this was key."* In a similar way to the processes narrated by Julia in relation to the time preceding her engagement with the FP-25, the dominant political position, now operationalised as "I as a fully committed FP-25 militant", could not be integrated with other positions that could inhibit her involvement with the organisation. Her organisational relationships and the political struggle were thus prioritised over caring for her two children, who were intermittently living with her parents or moving around with her, and over establishing intimate stable relationships: *"this was related to the type of political choices I made. These choices held a key place in my thinking and thus the idea of having a partner didn't really have any bearing."* This detachment from family ties and stable intimate relationships was also reinforced by the living conditions underground, which limited her options and intensified her identification with the organisation's collective identity: *"because from a certain*

point you can't go back (...) you can't go to the legal structure either, you can't simply go home." Both the dominance of Julia's position "I as a loyal comrade" and the subjugation of family related positions, such as "I as a mother", are clear signs of what della Porta[53] termed as affective closure. For Julia, being a loyal comrade was the feature of her militancy that kept her going. She felt that she had to be there for the comrades who were still fighting, as well as for the ones that had given their lives for the struggle. This type of closure, Julia's narrative suggests, inhibited her imagination regarding other life scenarios, fuelling the perception that there was no other option than being fully committed to her militant identity.

However, despite not being able to simply "go back", as time went by, Julia started to give more weight to subjugated I-positions that brought her closer to an imagined return to life aboveground. Julia stopped participating directly in violent actions, which supported the emergence of the counter-position "I as a non-active FP-25 member": *"I said I couldn't carry on participating in actions (...) and practically I hardly got involved anymore."* The majority of the voices feeding this counter-positioning were associated with the theme "identification with the organisation" and can be formulated as "I, who do not identify with the role of a militant" and "I as a member of an inefficient and unprepared organisation": *"the truth is that I never felt like a guerrilla militant, in the sense that I always had the perception that my skills in terms of training, knowledge and know-how were infinitely below what would be reasonable and necessary for the kind of proposal we put forward."* Thus, the emergence of this centrifugal-positioning was closely associated with a fracturing of Julia's personal identification with the organisation's goals and its capacity for effective transformation, which is supported by Horgan's findings[54] concerning pathways to disengagement, where psychological factors such as disillusionment with the organisation can play an active role. Beyond the failure of militants' training, she also linked the organisation's inefficiency to the absence of collective reflection regarding goals, plans and actions – *"we started lame and we never recovered in two ways: in the sense of reflection on what we were doing and what we wanted to do, and in the sense of the means we used to carry out the actions."* This led to an increased self-focused guilt regarding unsuccessful actions, particularly the ones involving the death of comrades, which at the same time fed the centrifugal I-positions encouraging Julia's disengagement. For Julia, the death of comrades in confrontations with the police were *"a tsunami within the organisation"*, *"an earthquake"* that caused *"an extremely strong sense of guilt"*, because she considered that *"a good part of the deaths occurred due to clear operational failure"*.

This movement of subjugated I-positions under the theme "identification with the organisation" seems to have supported Julia's distancing from the FP-25. Moreover, it seems to have motivated a dominance reversal of I-positions under the theme "affiliative, personal and social contexts". Julia began to move the previously dominant I-position "I as an idealist looking for social transformation" to the background, while putting the interests of her own family first, giving voice to the "I as a mother" and "I as a committed partner" I-positions. The growing power of these I-positions led her to intentionally assume new behaviours which compromised her life underground: *"my partner was arrested while robbing a bank (…) he was injured, shot, and went to hospital (…) I was living underground, they were all arrested in that action and I said: I'm going to visit the block, I don't care."*

In sum, during the first part of this period of time Julia's narrative suggests the dominance of a pro-engagement centripetal I-position, essentially related to a strong identification with the FP-25, its goals and principles. During the second part of this period of time a centrifugal-positioning starts to emerge, defying her identification with the organisation and her belief in its efficacy to achieve social and political transformation. This pro-disengagement positioning both reinforces and is reinforced by the move to the foreground of subjugated pro-disengagement voices, under the theme "affiliative, personal and social contexts".

Concerning the processes of radicalisation vs. deradicalisation, at the beginning of this period of time, Julia expressed deeply radicalised narratives congruent with her initial involvement and continued engagement with the organisation. One of the most powerful pro-radicalisation centripetal I-positions found in Julia's narrative is under the theme of "social injustice": "I as a fighter against social injustice". This position is associated with her perception of social injustice as the result of an unfair capitalist state machine which *"exists to protect capitalists."* Consistently, the I-position under the theme "violence", "I as a social transformation agent who perceives violence as necessary", is also empowered, because violent actions perpetrated against capitalist symbols were seen as an effective way of stopping the capitalist machine and reversing the unequal treatment and distribution of resources which particularly affected the working class. Moreover, the violent actions perpetrated by the organisation, which were seen as less political by some militants, such as the bank robberies, were perceived as necessary for the organisation's survival. At this time, Julia's narrative suggests that she developed an I-position of "I as an FP-25 militant prioritising collective decisions over individual reasoning", resulting in the by-passing of self-reflection and almost automatic legitimation of violent actions: *"We had a more or less acquired rhythm of doing*

things and we weren't always thinking about if we were doing the right thing." This behaviour seems to be the result of the centripetal movement of positions described above. That is, the majority of I-positions were in strict agreement, reinforcing each other and inclining the self to the monological side. It also corresponds to what della Porta[55] terms cognitive closure, which starts to take place when individual reasoning and reflection mirror the collective justifications and decisions.

However, in the final phase of this period of time, as the aforementioned pro-disengagement centrifugal-positioning starts to emerge, a centrifugal-positioning pro-deradicalisation also begins to take form under the theme "violence". The subjugated position "I as a social transformation agent who questions the necessity of violence" starts to make itself heard: *"at a certain point the organisation chose to take action against employers who laid people off (...) I agreed that this kind of action could trigger reactions from the workers (...) the reality of the facts proved me wrong, on the contrary, this triggered some situations… it scared people and they avoided such situations."*

In sum, in the first part of this period of time only pro-radicalisation I-positions were identified in Julia's narrative account, focusing on the themes "social injustice" and "violence". It is in this period of time that we were able to identify the main changes in "beliefs, feelings and behaviours in directions that increasingly justify intergroup violence and demand sacrifice in defence of the in-group", as pointed out by McCauley and Moskalenko.[56] In the second part of this period of time, a pro-deradicalisation positioning begins to take form, mainly under the theme "violence".

[INSERT TABLE 3 HERE]

Period of time 3: After FP-25

Julia disengaged from the FP-25 a couple of years before its dissolution because she was arrested. Consistently, in this period of time only pro-disengagement I-positions can be identified. One of these positions is associated with a transformation in Julia's personal and social context. Julia's narrative suggests that during her time in prison, and afterwards, the "I as a mother" I-position was strongly reinforced: *"It was at the pre-prison stage and then prison*

itself (...) it was the time to digest the concept in the affective sense – how could we recover from a certain sloppiness towards the kids, sloppiness in the sense of oversight of our role as parents?" This led her to decide that *"when I leave prison, I will dedicate the next ten years to my children, and that's what I did."* Julia appears to have been capable of negotiating clear boundaries between family and political I-positions which are now allowed to enter into dialogue and express their voice in her self-system: *"I have a goal, but it is no longer the only goal. I wouldn't endanger my relationships with my children again in the name of a political conviction. (...) Today is simple - I'm politically active, but I don't go to meetings, demonstrations or anything else on my children's birthdays - those are sacred days (...) my priorities have clearly turned around. For me, today, it's clear that personal relationships are the key in my personal wellbeing, and personal wellbeing allows me to have good relationships with others and to give something to others. So, I've clearly reversed these logics."*

Throughout her time in prison, Julia appears to also have made a gradual integration of her experience as a militant, which Ferguson and colleagues[57] have also found to be common among Northern Irish militants who have spent time in prison: *"there are many mirrors and many curtains between what I am today and what I was then."* She reflects on both positive and negative consequences, integrating them into a meta-position under the theme "identification with the organisation": "I as a critic and reflective political activist". This meta-position allows Julia to come to terms with the fact that she is not a member of the FP-25 anymore, but at the same time it gives her the certainty that she remains aware of the social and political reality of what has been and of what still is. During this period of time, Julia's narratives mainly suggest pro-deradicalisation I-positions. One of these positions is a meta-position – "I as an activist disappointed with Marxist ideas" – and focuses on the theme of ideology which incorporates her disagreements with core issues of Marxism-Leninism: *"the Marxist left used to say that when the proletariat has nothing to do, it only has one thing to do which is the revolution. They were deceived, because when people have nothing to lose, they lose their minds and therefore can't build anything."* This meta-position gave particular voice to Julia's criticism regarding the effective transformative power of a vanguard (which some FP-25 members claimed the organisation to be), and the legitimacy of its actions: *"What was wrong and what we couldn't understand at the time was that the confrontation has to have a broad base, it has to have an actual and consolidated social facet. It can't be a group of people which elects itself as the solution."* This new ideological positioning seems to be closely linked with an innovative pro-deradicalisation meta-position on the theme of

"violence" that could be formulated as "I as a social transformation agent looking for more effective ways to achieve social transformation". Julia expresses this position by stating her hope of finding different strategies to solve social conflicts, since the violent means employed by the FP-25 did not deliver the expected results: *"it's not enough to kill employers to solve the social conflict. It takes much more than that. To tell you the truth we haven't found the way to solve it yet, but I haven't given up yet."* However, and despite the dominance of these pro-deradicalisation I-positions, Julia still narrates a perspective consistent with a pro-radicalisation I-position under the theme of "social injustice": "I as a fighter against social injustice". The preservation of this centripetal I-position throughout time suggests the centrality of this issue within Julia's self-narrative. This position gives voice mainly to her perception of social differences and governmental attack on the working class: *"Today we live different inequalities – we have killed the interior of the country and we have focussed on the coast (…) because the rest of the country died, we know that it died – what the state built was a completely unstructured society. (...) Frankly, this is a reading of the social reality that I have maintained throughout the years, because I think that the state is run to protect those who have money, it's very simple."* Related to this position, another pro-radicalisation I-position centred on the theme of 'violence' continues to have a space in Julia's self-narrative, although being a subjugated position: "I as an activist perceiving violence as a potential means to achieve social transformation". Julia relies on this I-position to justify past FP-25's violent actions: *"I don't regret the kind of actions carried out by the organisation and therefore I don't distance myself from the kind of decisions that have been made. I still think that history… and those who have read a bit of history know that social transformations almost always are achieved through violent confrontations."* Interestingly, what seems to account for the weakened voice and more flexible statement of this pro-violence position is the fact that it seems to be in dialogue with the pro-deradicalisation meta-position of "I as a social transformation agent looking for more effective ways to achieve social transformation". Thus, Julia reaffirms her desire and motivation to keep looking for alternative forms of achieving social transformation: *"I still think that the social reality is deeply unjust (…) and it is necessary to change it even if I don't have the formula for doing it, but I keep trying different proposals, solutions, sometimes with more conviction, other times with less conviction."* In accordance with dialogical self-theory,[58] the development of different meta-positions seems to have allowed Julia to develop a more coherent and comprehensive self-narrative, encompassing the multiple voices of differentiated I-positions in an integrated manner, leaving her more open and prepared for change.

In sum, Julia's narrative of this period of time displays a dominance of pro-deradicalisation I-positions. This consistency notwithstanding, a pro-radicalisation I-position still seems to have a voice, mainly under the theme of "social injustice". However, this I-position seems to be in dialogue and regulated by the deradicalised meta-position of "I as a social transformation agent looking for more effective ways to achieve social transformation".

[INSERT TABLE 4 HERE]

Concluding remarks

We believe that we must move beyond the analysis of individual, social, contextual, political and relational factors in isolation in order to understand them in their dynamic interplay. We suggest that dialogical self theory is a relevant tool for this purpose, allowing us to understand the path of identity transformation that ultimately may lead to a successful disengagement from politically violent activities and/or organisations and to deradicalisation. This may happen by integrating diverse influences or positions, from the micro to the macro level, into a coherent whole. Illustrating this perspective, the analysis of the present case enabled us to explore the dynamics between these different positions in action, that is, as they are voiced in Julia's narrative account, and to identify and analyse the processes of change and their intrapersonal management. By understanding Julia´s internal I-positions of transformation, we are able to shed light on her self-narrative and identity change. Every person has a developmental trajectory that is impossible to replicate, but at the same time universal human patterns are present in this trajectory. To use an idea borrowed from White,[59] we are bound to indeterminism (the multiplicity of trajectories) in determinism (the human possibilities for development). The detailed and intensive study of a single case, in its human and contextually specificity, can lead to the identification of generic and universal processes, which can be generalised and applied to other individual cases.[60] Through the detailed analysis of the way each person describes and organizes their different I-positions, the dialogues and dynamic forces that occur between them, the significant others and the historical/societal positions at

large, we can understand the general processes of construction and hierarchizing of meanings. The way personal meanings emerge from these dialogical forces facilitates our understanding of the coherence of the self and also of its transformations.

Our results suggest that push and pull factors may be conceptualised as the expression of a variety of positions of the self which elaborate different personal meanings involved in the processes of engagement vs. disengagement and radicalisation vs. deradicalisation regarding political violence. Moreover, we were able to see how dialogue between a multiplicity of I-positions creates meaning in each period of time of Julia's life and influences her beliefs, feelings and behaviours.

The potential of the narrative-dialogical approach goes beyond other qualitative methodologies, such as content or thematic analysis, since the mapping of the constantly changing positioning and repositioning adds a dynamic and developmental perspective. Moreover, one of the strengths of this approach is its potential application to both prevention work with individuals at risk of engagement with an armed organisation at home or abroad, and intervention work with individuals who have been convicted of terrorism offences, as well as with returnees who have been engaged in conflicts overseas. In terms of prevention work, Julia's case shows that it is possible to identify pro-engagement and pro-radicalisation I-positions even before the person becomes a committed militant. For instance, Julia's familiarity with radicalised individuals, her admiration for former militants who had been involved in armed struggle in Portugal, as well as the grievances fuelled by the politicisation she experienced after the Portuguese Revolution, contributed to her involvement with an armed organisation. Thus, after identifying such engagement- and radicalisation-prone positions, prevention practitioners would be able to offer adequate counter-narratives and to assist the development of meta-positions that may facilitate the construction of a more dialogical self. Julia's narrative makes it clear that the kind of involvement needed to be a member of such an organization demands a very strong centripetal movement of I-positions, leaning to the monological side of the spectrum monologue-dialogue. One future line of research could be the comparison of this centripetal pattern with those of people involved in other kind of organizations that demand intense commitment (e.g. becoming a military, a hedge fund manager, a priest).

As far as intervention work is concerned, the dialogical analysis of (ex)militants' narrative accounts approaches each case individually in order to understand the complex range

of factors that explain engagement and radicalisation, as well as disengagement and deradicalisation, thus not suggesting a one-size fits all model. Such an approach allows the recognition of personal aims, loyalties, priorities, grievances, but also of collective narratives and cultural resources and their change or preservation over time. Understanding these aspects allows interventions to identify the areas that need to be worked on and to look for alternative ways that will allow individuals to pursue their ideals through fulfilling legal means. Julia recognises that during and after her time in prison, her parents' support was key to getting her back on her feet, since while in prison she was not able to take care of her children and afterwards she had no house or job to return to. However, not everyone has this type of support networks to help them get through such periods. In addition, the fact that in Portugal the violent past is not much talked about, which mostly has negative consequences, also helps former militants to (re-)integrate into society and to keep long-term desistance. Today, Julia is an active member of a legal political party and works in an organisation that shares her political and social concerns.

Finally, we believe that the combination of this narrative-dialogical framework with a system that could track innovative moments, that is micro-developmental change process across individual narratives[61], may fill some of the gaps in the disengagement and deradicalisation literature: the need for a clear theory of change, accompanied by a robust methodology to track such changes[62] and a reliable risk assessment procedure for use with a terrorist population.[63]

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Hubert J. M. Hermans and the two anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments and constructive criticism.

Funding

This work was supported by the British Academy Research Fellowship [GRANT NUMBER pf170092] and by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology through the post-doctoral grants SFRH/BPD/80671/2011 and SFRH/BPD/108674/2015.

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Table 1. Thematic framework: The external voice of the FP-25

ENGAGEMENT - DISENGAGEMENT	
Themes	**FP-25's positions**
Affiliative, personal and social contexts	Familiarity with radicalised individuals, personal availability, existence of shared narratives and cultural resources which supported revolutionary activities of a generation growing up after the Revolution.
Identification with the organisation	FP-25 militants tended to share the organisation's ideological perspectives and strategic political paths, particularly the defence of workers' rights and the implementation of a fairer political system through the use of violence.
RADICALISATION - DERADICALISATION	
Themes	**FP-25's positions**
Ideology (vanguard)	Most FP-25 militants identified themselves as Marxist-Leninists. Powerful narratives justifying the pertinence of violence and of a 'vanguard' tend to be found in Marxist-Leninist militants' discourses, which justify the engagement with small armed groups operating without broad popular support, secure in the knowledge that they are working towards an inevitable event for which they will also be the most prepared.
Social Injustice (grievance)	This mainly includes perceptions of economic discrimination against workers. Militants lacked confidence in official institutions, shared frustration with the current legal way of fighting, experienced feelings of injustice and related to the victims' suffering. FP-25's targets were perceived as perpetrators, not as victims – they caused the suffering of many families and were at the origin of massive social injustices.
Violence (approval and operationalization)	Violent acts are seen as central in bringing about and preparing for social and political change. At first, FP-25's violence stopped short of killing people, focusing instead on destroying patrimony and injuring people (e.g., "kneecapping", "leave the target in a wheelchair to serve as an example"). However, over time there was an intensification of the struggle and after much discussion the decision was made to tar-

	get specific individuals to kill, even if some militants did not agree with it.

Table 2. Julia's dialogical positioning before FP-25

ENGAGEMENT – DISENGAGEMENT: BEFORE FP-25				
Themes	**External event(s)**	**Dominant I-position(s)**	**Dialogical function**	**Subjugated I-position(s)**
Affiliative, personal and social contexts	**Engagement**			
	Post-Revolution period euphoria.	"I as an idealist looking for social transformation" "I as a young person admiring and working with former left-wing violent militants who fought during the dictatorship"	Centripetal movement promoting engagement, as all other positions are subjugated and made invisible.	"I as a partner" "I as a mother"
RADICALISATION – DERADICALISATION: BEFORE FP-25				
Ideology (vanguard)	**Radicalisation**			
	Politicisation of the post-Revolution period.	"I as a Marxist-Leninist and anti-capitalist"	Centripetal movement promoting radicalisation, as all other positions are subjugated and made invisible.	"I as an activist disappointed with Marxist ideals"
Social Injustice (grievance)	Political landscape after the counter-	"I as a citizen feeling threatened by capitalism and	Centripetal movement promoting radi-	"I as a fighter against social

	revolution of November 25th 1975.	by a right-wing government"	calisation, as all other positions are subjugated and made invisible.	injustice"
Violence (approval and operationalisation)	Armed struggle conducted against the former regime by left-wing organisations.	"I as a political idealist perceiving past left-wing violent activists as heroic role models"	Centripetal movement promoting radicalisation, as all other positions are subjugated and made invisible.	"I as a social transformation agent who questions the necessity of violence"

Table 3. Julia's dialogical positioning during FP-25

ENGAGEMENT – DISENGAGEMENT: DURING FP-25				
Themes	**External event(s)**	**Dominant I-position(s)**	**Dialogical function**	**Subjugated I-position(s)**
Identification with the organisation	**Engagement**			
	Julia engages with the FP-25. Comradeship is strongly felt and feeds both cognitive and affective closure.	"I as a fully committed FP-25 militant" "I as a loyal comrade"	Centripetal I-position, organizing all other positions of the self and reinforcing engagement with the organisation.	"I as a non-active FP-25 member" "I, who do not identify with the role of a militant" "I as a member of an inefficient and unprepared organisation"
	Disengagement			
	Comrades are arrested or killed. Julia arrives at the conclusion that neither her or the organisation have ever been ready for the struggle they proposed.	"I as a non-active FP-25 member" "I, who do not identify with the role of a militant" "I as a member of an inefficient and unprepared or-	Centrifugal I-positions, creating a diversity of new meanings and opening the path to leave the organisation behind.	"I as not engaged in violence anymore" "I as a person who does not want to be arrested or go into exile", "I as someone who made definitive choices that

		ganisation"		don't allow me to return home"
Affiliative, personal and social contexts	**Disengagement**			
	Disappointment with the organisation. Partner injured and arrested. Julia starts prioritising her role as a mother and as a partner.	"I as a mother" "I as a committed partner" "I as a militant mourning the loss of close comrades"	Centrifugal I-positions that promote disengagement from the organisation and a change of personal focus. Here we observe a dominance reversal in relation to the previous period of time.	"I as an idealist looking for social transformation"
RADICALISATION – DERADICALISATION: DURING FP-25				
Social Injustice (grievance)	**Radicalisation**			
	Perception of a brutal capitalist establishment exploiting workers.	"I as a fighter against social injustice"	Centripetal I-position that promotes radicalisation.	"I as a non-violent activist against social injustice"
Violence (approval and operationalisation)	Violence against capitalist symbols in order to stop the abuses suffered by the workers. Acceptance of	"I as a social transformation agent who perceives violence as necessary" "I as an FP-25	Centripetal I-positions that promote radicalisation.	"I as a social transformation agent who questions the necessity of violence" "I as a social transformation

	collective decisions without reflexion or questioning.	militant prioritising collective decisions over individual reasoning"		agent looking for more effective ways to achieve social transformation" "I as someone who feels uncomfortable with decisions that are not discussed and reflected upon by the collective, but imposed by the leadership"
	Deradicalisation			
	Violence begins to backfire, leading to comrades' arrest or death and to the decrease of support from the workers.	"I as a social transformation agent who questions the necessity of violence"	Centrifugal I-position that starts distancing Julia from the commission of violence and from the armed organisation itself.	"I as a social transformation agent who perceives violence as necessary"

Table 4. Julia's dialogical positioning after FP-25

ENGAGEMENT – DISENGAGEMENT: AFTER FP-25				
Themes	**External event(s)**	**Dominant I-position(s)**	**Dialogical function**	**Subjugated I-position(s)**
Affiliative, personal and social contexts	**Disengagement**			
	Julia is arrested and disengages from the organisation. Personal relationships are rethought and prioritised.	"I as a mother" "I as an idealist looking for social transformation"	Here we observe a negotiation between Julia's positions as a family member and her political activity. Both I-positions seem to be expressing their voices in a truly dialogical self-system.	"I as a member of an armed organisation"
Identification with the organisation	**Disengagement**			
	Disengagement from the organisation and time in prison change Julia's perceptions of both the FP-25 and the political struggle.	"I as a critic and reflective political activist"	Meta-position that empowers the acceptance of leaving the organisation behind, but remaining a conscious and committed political activist.	"I as an FP-25 militant prioritising collective decisions over individual reasoning" "I as a fully committed FP-25 militant" "I as a loyal

				comrade”
RADICALISATION – DERADICALISATION: AFTER FP-25				
Ideology (vanguard)	**Deradicalisation**			
	After seeing the Marxist-Leninist principles put into practice, Julia concludes that they do not deliver on their promises.	“I as an activist disappointed with Marxist ideals”	Meta-position that helps justify the non-violent present, since the violent past did not bring the expected results	“I as a Marxist-Leninist and anti-capitalist”
Social Injustice (grievance)	**Radicalisation**			
	Julia’s desire to keep fighting for a fairer world is constant, only the cause evolves according to the social and political landscape.	“I as a fighter against social injustice”	This remains a centripetal I-position that promotes Julia’s radicalisation, but that does not lead her down the violent path anymore.	“I as a non-violent activist against social injustice”
Violence (approval and operationalisation)	**Deradicalisation**			
	Having been a member of an armed organisation, Julia realises that causing physical harm to others	“I as a social transformation agent looking for more effective ways to achieve social	Meta-position allowing the coherence of a political dynamic self that is constantly looking for alternatives	“I as an activist who perceives violence as a potential means to achieve social transfor-

	is not enough to solve social and political injustices.	transformation"	to improve the social world, learning by trial and error. Here we also observe the negotiation between the positions that advocate violence and the ones that advocate other means of protest/struggle.	mation" "I as a social transformation agent who perceives violence as necessary"